

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Currently Amended) A method of identifying conflicts in a set of system operating rules, said method comprising the steps of:

a) storing rule data representing a set of one or more system operating rules, each rule comprising at least one system command;

b) receiving semantic data representing a graph structure of hierarchical semantic relationships between available system commands, including those in the set of system operating rules;

c) expanding the system operating rules according to the allowable hierarchical semantic relationships between the available system command portions, to give, for any particular system operating rule, an additional system operating rule for each hierarchical semantic level in the graph structure below the system command present in the particular rule; and

d) comparing the expanded system rules to identify those rules for which a semantic conflict occurs therebetween.

2. (Currently Amended) A method according to claim 1, wherein:

each stored rule comprises a subject portion identifying one or more system users, a system command portion identifying the system command to which the rule relates, and an object portion identifying one or more system objects to which the rule applies; and wherein

when any of the system rules identify more than one system ~~[[users]]~~ user in the subject portion, and/or more than one system objects in the object portion, ~~the method further comprises~~ then expanding such rules to produce replacement rules having a single system user in the subject portion, and a single system object in the object portion, said replacement rules being produced before the expansion step c) is performed.

3. (Currently Amended) A method according to claim 1, wherein each stored rule further comprises a positive indication portion, which indicates whether the rule is to be applied positively or negatively, the method further comprising ~~the step of~~

(e) resolving any identified conflicts in the expanded set of initial rules to give a resolved expanded set of system operating rules; and

producing from the semantic data a second graph structure corresponding to the ~~inverse mirror image~~ of the hierarchical semantic relationships between the available system commands, and

wherein the expanding step c) uses the hierarchical semantic relationships of the second graph structure to expand any rules for which the positive indication portion thereof indicates are to be applied negatively.

4. (Currently Amended) A method of generating a set of system operating rules from an initial set of system operating rules, ~~comprising the steps of: and~~ identifying conflicts in the initial set of system operating rules using the method of claim 1 ~~[[; and]]~~, wherein said method further comprises:

(e) resolving any identified conflicts in the expanded set of initial rules to give a resolved expanded set of system operating rules.

5. (Currently Amended) A method ~~according to claim 4, and further comprising the step of: of identifying conflicts in a set of system operating rules, said method comprising:~~

a) storing rule data representing a set of one or more system operating rules, each rule comprising at least one system command;

b) receiving semantic data representing a graph structure of hierarchical semantic relationships between available system commands, including those in the set of system operating rules;

c) expanding the system operating rules according to the allowable hierarchical semantic relationships between the available system command portions, to give, for any particular system operating rule, an additional system operating rule for each hierarchical semantic level in the graph structure below the system command present in the particular rule;

d) comparing the expanded system rules to identify those rules for which a semantic conflict occurs therebetween;

(e) resolving any identified conflicts in the expanded set of initial rules to give a resolved expanded set of system operating rules; and

(f) reducing the resolved expanded set of initial rules to canonical form to give an optimised set of system operating rules.

6. (Currently Amended) A method ~~of~~ as in claim 4 further comprising operating a system ~~comprising~~ applying the generated set of system operating rules ~~generated by claim 4~~ in the system operation.

7. (Currently Amended) A computer storage medium containing a computer program or suite of programs arranged such that when executed by a computer it causes the computer to perform the method of claim 1.

8. (Cancelled)

9. (Currently Amended) A system for identifying conflicts in a set of system operating rules, said system comprising:

a) storage means for storing rule data representing a set of one or more system operating rules, each rule comprising at least one system command;

b) data receiving means for receiving semantic data representing a graph structure of hierarchical semantic relationships between available system commands, including those in the set of system operating rules ; and

c) processing means operable to:

c1) expand the system operating rules according to the allowable hierarchical semantic relationships between the available system command portions, to give, for any particular system operating rule, an additional system operating rule for each hierarchical semantic level in the graph structure below the system command present in the particular rule ;
and

c2) compare the expanded system rules to identify those rules for which a semantic conflict occurs therebetween.

10. (Currently Amended) A system according to claim 9, wherein:
each stored rule comprises a subject portion identifying one or more system users, a system command portion identifying the system command to which the rule relates, and an object portion identifying one or more system objects to which the rule ~~applies~~; applies; and ~~wherein~~

when any of the system rules identify more than one system users in the subject portion, and/or more than one system objects in the object portion, then the processing means ~~is further arranged to expand~~ expands such rules to produce replacement rules having a single system user in the subject portion, and a single system object in the object portion.

11. (Currently Amended) A system according to claim 9, wherein each stored rule further comprises a positive indication portion, which indicates whether the rule is to be applied positively or negatively; and wherein:

the processing means is further operable to: (i) produce from the semantic data a second graph structure corresponding to the ~~inverse mirror image~~ of the hierarchical semantic relationships between the available system commands; and (ii) to use the hierarchical semantic relationships of the second graph structure to expand any rules for which the positive indication portion thereof indicates are to be applied negatively.

12. (Currently Amended) A system ~~for generating as in claim 9 which generates an optimised~~ optimized set of system operating rules from an initial set of system operating rules, ~~comprising:~~

~~the system of claim 9;~~ and further ~~comprising~~ comprises:

processing means arranged to ~~[[:]]~~ resolve any identified conflicts in the expanded set of initial rules to give a resolved expanded set of system operating rules.

13. (Currently Amended) A system according to claim 12, wherein the processing means is further arranged to:

reduce the resolved expanded set of initial rules to canonical form to give an ~~optimised~~ optimized set of system operating rules.

14. (Currently Amended) A system as in claim 12 further arranged to operate in accordance ~~with a~~ with the resolved set of system operating rules ~~generated by the system of claim 12.~~

15. (Currently Amended) A system as in claim 13 further arranged to operate in accordance ~~with a~~ with the optimized set of system operating rules ~~generated by the system of claim 13.~~